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## **Navy Returns Kaho'olawe Access to Hawaii**

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PEARL HARBOR, Hawaii (NNS) -- The state of Hawaii accepted responsibility for access to Kaho'olawe and thanked the Navy for cleaning up the island at a ceremony Nov. 12, at the Queen Iolani palace in downtown Honolulu.

Rear Adm. Barry McCullough, commander, Navy Region Hawaii and commander, Naval Surface Group Middle Pacific, was on hand as a Navy representative at the ceremony.

"This was an unprecedented effort. I'm confident that we've accomplished what Title 10 required us to do," said McCullough.

Hawaii has had title to Kaho'olawe since May 1994. The Navy retained the right to control access to the island during cleanup. The right to access control expired on Veterans' Day.

The cleanup has taken the Navy nearly a decade. In that time, workers have removed ordnance from more than 20,000 acres of land of the 26,000 accessible acres on the island.

According to Becky Hommon, Navy Region Hawaii environmental counsel, during the cleanup phase, the state had full authority to prioritize areas to be cleaned. The state also chose the manner in which the cleanup was done.

"The state wanted the clearance to yield an island with as little visible evidence of military use as possible," said Hommon. "The workers picked up scrap metal by hand. They took down wooden structures. They cut up and hauled away target vehicles. We were not allowed to landfill anything on Kaho'olawe."

Hommon said the only evidence of "military presence" allowed to remain on Kaho'olawe was that which the state allowed. For example, spotting towers and concrete protective towers remain on the island, as does an old Seabee camp. A 9.5-mile cross-island road known as K-1 will also remain.

Hommon said she is proud of the effort that has gone into the clearing of Kaho'olawe and of the people who performed that job.

"It was just a great project," she said. "The Navy really bent over backwards to accommodate the state's interest, and I have a lot of respect for the workers and the aloha they showed towards Kaho'olawe. The workers I walked with spoke about the pride they felt in being a part of cleaning up Kaho'olawe so their families in the future could go out there. It was just really satisfying to see the results of an agreement worked out 10 years ago."

McCullough praised the workers for their safety record during the cleanup and is pleased with the workers' accomplishments.

"I'm glad more than 25 hundred cultural sites on the island will be available to the people of Hawaii to visit," McCullough said. "Our promise was a cleanup to support safe and meaningful access to Kaho'olawe for the people of Hawaii, and I think that's what we provided."

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